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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/20/2017

TAGS: KWBG PBTS PREL PHUM IS

SUBJECT: SETTLER LEADER SAYS OUTPOST REMOVAL IMPOSSIBLE
WITHOUT VIOLENCE

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Following PM Olmert's November 19 announcement that he intends to evacuate ""illegal outposts,"" Yesha Council Chairman Dani Dayan told PolOff that this is ""technically impossible"" and will produce violent reactions from settlers. Dayan said the Yesha previously thought the GoI was threatening a freeze on settlement activity to increase pressure for the Yesha to support outpost evacuation, but now believes Olmert is considering both issues in the context of Roadmap Phase One obligations and the Annapolis meeting. END SUMMARY.

""Removal of Outposts Will Mean Removal of Olmert""

¶2. (C) Immediately after PM Olmert announced November 19 that ""illegal outposts"" will be removed, Yesha Council Chairman Dani Dayan told PolOff that this is ""technically impossible,"" and Yesha will use ""all its political leverage"" to bring down the Olmert government if it pursues this policy. Dayan indicated that he believes Olmert's announcement referred to 26 outposts and some 1,0000 settlers, although the GOI issued no confirmed public list of outposts for removal. He noted that, before removing 7000 settlers from Gush Katif in Gaza in 2005, then-PM Sharon prepared the IDF and the Israeli public for this development. Dayan said Olmert has not conditioned the IDF or the public, and any attempt to evacuate the outposts will ""inevitably lead to violence."" Dayan suggested that the Yesha have not decided whether or how to resist evacuation of outposts. Asked directly, he said only ""we'll cross that bridge when we come to it,"" noting that any settlers removed from outposts will resettle elsewhere in the West Bank.

Settlement Freeze

¶3. (C) Dayan said he believes a ""settlement freeze"" means ""no new building permits and no new tenders"" and is already in effect, since no new building permits have been approved in the past several months. The practical outcome of continuing a freeze, he said, will be an end of large construction projects in the large settlement blocs, but it will be easy to continue construction in the smaller settlements. He said he expects that with a ""freeze,"" planned projects for which permits are already issued in large and small settlement blocs will continue. He said he also anticipates that a freeze will put great pressure on settler families having additional children and on newlyweds seeking to live near parents.

A dismal outlook

¶4. (C) Dayan said the Yesha Council was wrong in believing the GoI threat of a settlement freeze was in order to pressure the Yesha to support the removal of outposts. According to Dayan, only now, after meeting PM Olmert on this issue, does Yesha understand that the GoI is considering outpost removal and a settlement freeze in the context of GOI obligations under Phase One of the Roadmap in advance of the 11/27 Annapolis meeting.

¶5. (C) Dayan said he believes PM Olmert knows ""less about settlers than he does about Palestinians,"" and is merely using the settlers as a bargaining chip in negotiations. He urged the USG to focus its efforts in the negotiations on humanitarian issues, such as access and movement, and to deter permanent status issues for ""ten or fifteen years.""
Dayan said the time and conditions are not right for negotiations, and Annapolis will be a ""one day photo op"" that leads to intense violence, the fall of PM Olmert's government, and a tarnished USG reputation.

WALLES
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